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ABSTRACT

Based on the feeling that affective dimensions of reading are important and deserve evaluation, a scale is suggested to assess attitudes toward reading. The scale consists of a series of statements and five possible responses to each, ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree." Each response is given a numerical value; and the higher the score received by a respondent, the more positive his attitude toward reading is judged to be. A list of 14 criteria guide the formulation of appropriate statements for such a scale. Modifications in the scale and in the statements can be made to suit the reading abilities of given respondents. (A sample test, a scoring key, and references are included.) (AL)

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Assessing Attitudes Toward Reading

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Testing is a major enterprize in education. Each year, millions of dollars and hours are spent for the purpose of discovering whether objectives of education have been met. Name a course taught in schools and any specialist in the content area can easily point to a wide array of standardized and informal measures of achievement in the subject. These tests will tend to have one thing in common, however--they will assess skill and knowledge while ignoring how pupils feel about what they have learned. But don't most course objectives include the affective as well as the cognitive dimension of learning? That is, aren't most teachers duly concerned with pupil attitudes as well as with pupil knowledge? Certainly, one of the most often repeated objectives of reading instruction is that students should develop good lifetime reading habits. It they do, it will

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be because they develop a good attitude toward reading to accompany the skills necessary for reading.

Putting this another way, to focus more closely on reading instruction, the major goals of any reading program must be that students learn how to read and that they will read--even when they don't have to. There could be no more important objective of reading instruction than that pupils learn to love reading.

This being so, why haven't attitudes, like reading skills, assumed an important position in testing batteries designed to measure objectives of reading instruction? Certainly, commercial test publishers must bear some share of the responsibility. They have seemingly refused to make standardized attitude scales available. Moreover, an assumption seems to exist on the part of authorities and practicioners in the field of reading that though attitudes are important, they really aren't quantifiable in the sense that, for example, a pupil's instructional reading level is. This is, in fact, not the case. But the teacher who is determined to measure pupils' attitudes toward reading has almost nowhere to turn for help. The commercial market, the professional literature, even tests and measurements courses in college offer little if any assistance.

All of these considerations led to the development of a scale to measure attitudes toward reading which first appeared in the Journal of Reading (Estes, 1971). Since

that time, the scale's use has been wide, judging from reader response. Refinements in the scoring procedure have been made, thanks to the suggestions of users, and ideas for modifying the scale to fit particular settings have been compiled. This paper will provide a brief description of the construction of the scale and will delineate procedures for scale modification.

This attitude scale, called a Likert scale for the man who developed the technique (Edwards and Kenny, 1946), offers the possibility of attitude measurement which is practical and accurate. The first step in its development was to compile a list of statements through which, when pupils responded with degrees of agreement, they would reveal a part of their feeling toward reading. A tryout scale was administered for the purpose of eliminating inconsistent statements, thereby deriving a refined set of items to comprise the final scale.

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Insert Figure 1 about here

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Pupils are asked to respond to the scale statements on a continuum of agreement indicated by the five possibilities listed at the top of the list. Response values vary depending on whether the statement is negative or positive. For example, a response of strongly agree to a positive statement would be opposite in value to the same response to a negative statement. Possible confusion in scoring is

Figure 1

A Scale To Measure Students' Attitudes Toward Reading

DIRECTIONS:

This is a scale to measure attitudes toward reading. On the page to follow, you will find a series of statements relating to reading. Please indicate your feeling toward each statement by placing a check mark in the appropriate block next to the statement. Rate each statement on a scale from A to E as follows:

A will mean I strongly agree
B will mean I agree
C will mean I am undecided
D will mean I disagree
E will mean I strongly disagree

Please answer all items as honestly as possible. Your first reaction is probably the best.

Fill in all information at the top of the answer sheet as indicated. Any and all information given on this scale will be held in confidence. How you rate the statements cannot possibly affect your grade or standing in this course.

Figure 1 (Cont'd)

Name _____
Grade _____
Teacher _____

A will mean I strongly agree
B will mean I agree
C will mean I am undecided
D will mean I disagree
E will mean I strongly disagree

A Scale To Measure Attitudes Toward Reading

	A	B	C	D	E
1. Reading is for learning but not enjoyment.					
2. Money spent on books is well spent.					
3. There is nothing to be gained from reading books.					
4. Books are a bore.					
5. Reading is a good way to spend spare time.					
6. Sharing books in class is a waste of time.					
7. Reading turns me on.					
8. Reading is only for grade grubbers.					
9. Books aren't usually good enough to finish.					
10. Reading is rewarding to me.					
11. Reading becomes boring after about an hour.					
12. Most books are too long and dull.					
13. Free reading doesn't teach anything.					
14. There should be more time for free reading during the school day.					
15. There are many books which I hope to read.					
16. Books should not be read except for class requirements.					
17. Reading is something I can do without.					
18. A certain amount of summer vacation should be set aside for reading.					
19. Books make good presents.					
20. Reading is dull.					

Score _____

eliminated, however, by the format of the scale and use of an acetate scoring sheet. Directions for this follow.

Pupils indicate their responses by placing a check mark in a block to the right of each statement. These fall under letters corresponding to the five response possibilities. The scoring key has response values indicated in the upper right hand corner of each block so that when reproduced as an acetate sheet, it can be used as an index to the values of responses. Each answer sheet can be scored by merely placing the acetate over the responses and reading through the sheet. The scorer can assign values to each response based on the values indicated. A pupil's score on the scale is the sum of the values of his responses.

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Insert Figure 2 about here

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Scores on the scale can range from twenty to one hundred. Previous administrations of the scale in its present form indicate that the average score will be about 100 with a standard deviation of 16, for pupils in grades 7-12. However, in lieu of norms based on various samples, the logical comparative data to use in interpreting scores are local percentiles. For ease of computation, the following interpretive procedure is recommended: (1) Determine the highest 20 percent of scores, making note of the lowest score in this upper group; (2) Determine the lowest 20 percent of scores, making note of the highest

Figure 2

ACETATE SCORING KEY

A Scale To Measure Attitudes Toward Reading

A	B	C	D	E
1	2	3	4	5
5	4	3	2	1
1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5
5	4	3	2	1
1	2	3	4	5
5	4	3	2	1
1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5
5	4	3	2	1
1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5
5	4	3	2	1
5	4	3	2	1
1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5
5	4	3	2	1
5	4	3	2	1
1	2	3	4	5

score in this lower group; (3) Use these two scores, which will be cut-off points for the upper and lower 20th percentiles, as indicators of very good or very bad attitudes. That is, any score higher than the cut-off for the upper percentile range, determined in step (1), will indicate a very good attitude. Conversely, any score lower than the cut-off for the lower percentile range, determined in step (2), will indicate a very bad attitude.

This scale to measure attitudes toward reading has broad application if modified to fit particular settings. For example, the wording of some items can be changed to make them more meaningful for certain groups such as retarded readers, adults, college students, elementary pupils, etc. Caution should be exercised in the rewording, however, to insure scale validity. The following fourteen criteria, modified from a list compiled by Edwards (1957), should be used as a guide:

1) Avoid statements referring to past rather than present.

2) Avoid factual statements.

3) Avoid ambiguity.

4) Avoid statements irrelevant to the psychological object under consideration.

5) Avoid statements likely to be endorsed by almost anyone or none.

6) Select statements believed to cover entire range of affective interest.

7) Use simple, clear, direct language.

8) Make statements short--20 words.

9) Each statement should have only one complete thought.

10) Avoid all, always, none, and never--they are ambiguous.

11) Use words like only, just, or merely are to be avoided.

12) Use simple sentences.

13) Avoid use of words perhaps incomprehensible to group.

14) Avoid use of double negatives.

An additional modification may be necessary for pupils of limited reading ability. It is permissable to read the scale statements to pupils, once response directions are explained and illustrated. If all pupils who use the scale use it in this manner, their scores will have comparative value. If, however, pupils of very limited reading ability are asked to read the statements, part of their score may reflect poor reading ability, since certain statements may not be understood clearly.

This technique for measuring pupil attitudes toward reading should add a valuable and essential ingredient to any reading assessment program. Combined with accurate measures of reading skill achievement, it should give clue to the second of the reading teacher's two important questions: Can pupils read? Will they read?

References

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